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MUSIC GUIDE

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MAGAZINE



**"UNPLUGGED WAS ROUGH.
I FELT IT WAS ALL A LITTLE BIT
BLOWN OUT OF PROPORTION"**

ERIC CLAPTON

Slowhand celebrates his 70th birthday with seven live shows at London's Royal Albert Hall

MY LIFE IN MUSIC

Andy McKee talks to us about the three records that made him pick up a guitar and change his life

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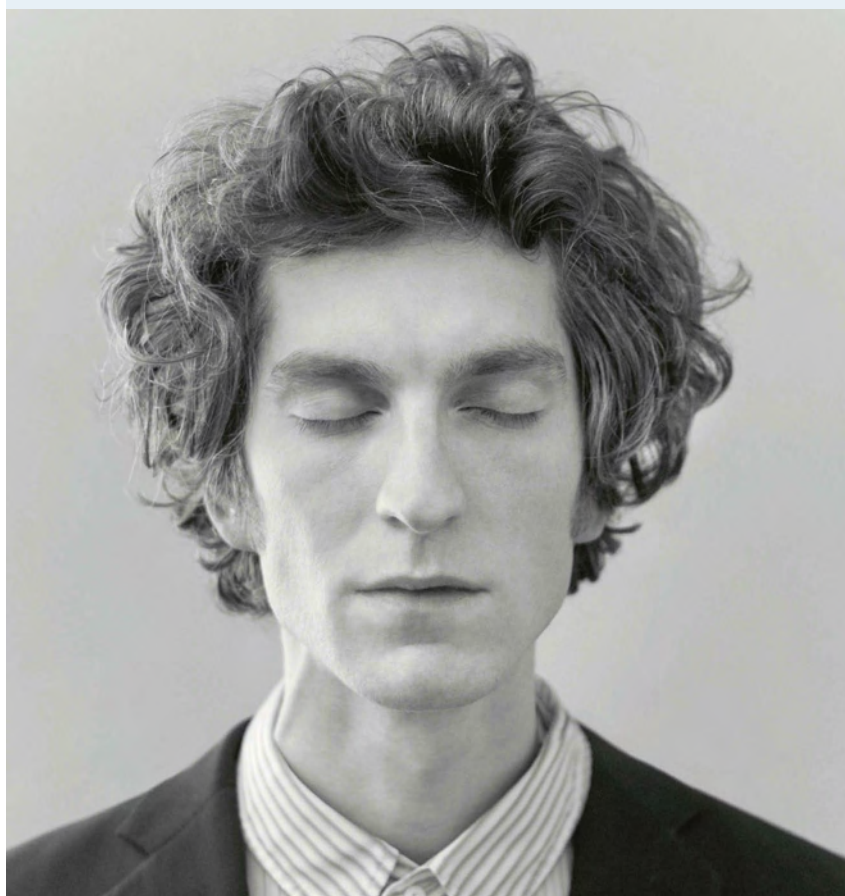
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CAMERON BLAKE

STYLE... (FOLK)

I'm a solo singer-songwriter living in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I play piano and guitar, but focus the most on the lyrics of my songs. I gravitate towards music that not only makes you feel something but also makes you think. I feel my new album, *Alone On The World Stage*, is my best to date. It began with a move across the country, away from my band. Then my wife and I had a baby so I was only able to noodle around on my own after we put the baby to bed. Naturally, I began writing songs that would sound complete without any added instrumentation. It's a hard thing to do. The record has a lot of songs about modern social concerns. The songs try to humanise some of the stories I was reading about in the news that have been de-humanised because of political agendas and statistics. My favourite moment during the sessions was when my wife stopped by the studio and heard the playback of 'Rise And Shine' for the first time. She kept looking over at me with this "Wow!" expression. 'Home Movie' is my favourite track. It describes what you'd see if you were growing up, watching an amateur movie that your dad made. I play a 1967 Martin D-35 dreadnought with Brazilian rosewood back and sides. For live work I use a Shure SM94 mic and a LR Baggs Venue DI pedal. I taught myself guitar. I'm 60 per cent a fingerpicker, occasionally using alternate tunings. My Martin really taught me how to play – not to over press. It exposes everything bad about your playing, but the trade-off is that it has its own soul and personality. I'm always writing songs, but never sure what it's going to turn into. I have to be quiet and alone. I think Tom Waits hit it on the head when he said, "Songwriting is like fishing. You have to be real quiet to catch the big ones."

www.cameronblakemusic.com



CARRIE MARTIN

STYLE... (FOLK/POP)

My music is easy listening – a mixture between folk and pop. Songwriting is my passion. I like my lyrics to mean something and hopefully inspire the listener. Every song on my new album, *What If...*, is about someone or something that has touched my life at some point. Emotions often trigger my creativity – it's my way of describing how I feel or how I see things. I'm proud of my first album, *Luna*, but feel this one is better because of the fabulous musicians who helped me. It was an honour to work with guitarist Gordon Giltrap, keyboardist Oliver Wakeman and violinist Ric Sanders. Gordon is so focused – I learned so much from him. My favourite song is the title track, because of Oliver's sublime contribution. He took the track to another dimension. Sometimes my songs write themselves in the middle of the night, which doesn't help with the beauty sleep. This often happens when I've been tinkling about on a guitar late at night. I play a Vintage Gordon Giltrap VE2000DLX through a Fishman SA220 PA system. It's been my regular guitar for over a year now, and has an amazing sound, both acoustically and plugged in. I like the nipped-in waist and I think it's an attractive looking guitar. It gets me lots of compliments and I'm in love with it. My dad taught me guitar when I was five, and later I had lessons at school. I still have lessons. I don't believe anybody is so good that they can't learn more. I am a fan of hybrid picking – I use a pick as well as playing fingerstyle. I also like to use alternative tunings – drop D and open G. I'm currently working on new material, and I'm playing at Filey Folk Festival, North Yorkshire, in early May. The most important thing I've learned as a musician? Never give up, enjoy every opportunity that life throws your way and above all, believe in yourself.

www.carriemartin.co.uk

JOHN DOYLE

STYLE... (MODERN TRAD. IRISH)

Along with Nuala Kennedy (vocals, flute, whistles) and Eamon O'Leary (vocals, bouzouki, guitar), I'm a member of The Alt, playing guitar, bouzouki and mandola. The Alt is a pilgrimage site on the slopes of Knocknarea, County Sligo, close to the alleged cairn of Queen Maeve, the fabled witch queen in Irish mythology. I've always loved the area and felt it was a beautiful name for a band. A singer-songwriter, multi-instrumentalist and producer, my own music is modern traditional Irish, while The Alt's sound is more traditional. Eamon and I are Dubliners, while Nuala is from Dundalk. We've been brought up in the Irish tradition and we've all emigrated. We decided to play together because we are friends and have a great collection of traditional songs. We also love harmony singing and wanted it to be the mainstay of our sound. There are songs from the Irish, Scottish, English and American traditions on our debut album, *The Alt*. We recorded it in an old log cabin in the North Carolina mountains. A beautiful spot, the surroundings made the album memorable. I use an acoustic when writing songs. I play Kevin Muiderman guitars, built especially for me to my specifications. Kevin is a brilliant luthier. I use a K&K dual mic and pickup, through K&K's Dual Quantum Blender. I also have a beautiful Jordan McConnell guitar, plus guitars by Lowden, Fylde, and Taylor. I'm self-taught. A lefty, I learned on my father's right-handed guitar upside down and then switched to a left-handed guitar when I was 14. I use a pick, although I do fingerstyle on occasion. It's rare that you'd find me in standard tuning. My favourite is an open C tuning – CFCGCD. Apart from working with The Alt, I am playing with Mike McGoldrick and John McCusker, and a new band called Usher's Island with Andy Irvine, Donal Lunny, Paddy Glackin and Mike McGoldrick. I am also touring with Mary Chapin Carpenter as her guitar player, plus some solo gigs.

www.johndoylemusic.com



MARTIN WELLER

STYLE... (PUNK/POP/ROCK)

The most exciting part of songwriting is the birth of a new song. I constantly write words and sometimes the music comes along with the lyrics. Other times I've a tune that words fit. I wrote my first song aged 13 and continue to compose, record and perform solo and with my bands, 40 years on. I'm a full-time songwriter, singer, guitarist and music/vocal coach, living in East Devon. My songs cover many styles – punk, pop, rock, angry, beautiful, soulful. Social comment is a constant throughout my records. Love is always a welcome subject too. For my new album, *Like*, I've co-written some tracks with guitar virtuoso Laurie Ward. The chemistry was incredible. 'Laughter' is my favourite track because I wanted an upbeat happy song and this one fits the bill. My regular guitar for 20 years has been a Jasmine TS58C. Made by Takamine, it's a honey-coloured jumbo acoustic/electric. It was love at first play, feels great under my fingers and sounds wonderful, plugged or unplugged. With a built in pre-amp, the Jasmine sounds great through most PA systems, or I use a Roland AC-33 Acoustic Chorus amp. For recording I use baritone and tenor ukuleles, and Gibson, Vox, Fender and Variax electric guitars. Live I use my Fender Telecaster or Gibson Melody Maker. Initially I plinked around on guitar on my own, then had some lessons at school, which were dull. When I was 12 I enjoyed being coached by a teacher who opened my mind to different styles of music. I practice daily, sometimes de-tuning the bottom E to D for a meatier bass sound. Learning from others is most valuable. Led Zeppelin, The Beatles, The Kinks, Pink Floyd, The Eagles, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Sex Pistols, The Jam, The Clash, The Damned and The Ramones have all given me inspiration and pleasure. Punk gave me a platform to release my anger and musical muscle. The acoustic guitar gives me access to a varied audience, and they to me.

www.lemonrock.com/martinweller



CARL CARLTON

STYLE... (ROCK)

Born in Germany, but based in America, I'm a guitarist, singer, writer and producer. I'd describe my music as songs with groove and content – lots of influences, such as early R&B, Dylan, Ry Cooder, The Band, Little Feat, Van Dyke Parks and Wilco. As a co-writer/producer/player I've worked with Robert Palmer, Eric Burdon, Jimmy Barnes, Joe Cocker, Taj Mahal, Donald Fagen, Levon Helm, Ian McLagan and Sonny Landreth, among others. I also compose and produce soundtracks, and have my own band, Carl Carlton and the Songdogs. We've just released a new album, *Lights Out In Wonderland*. We recorded it at Levon Helm's studio in Woodstock and David Vella's Temple Studios on Gozo. It's hard to say what my favourite track is – 'Little Men In The Radio', maybe, for the message and the very personal story. Most of my writing is done on acoustic guitars. My favourites are my 1945 Gibson J-45 and my 1955 Gibson SJN J-50, then a 1964 Gibson J-160E, a Lowden O23 and a rare 1960 Baldwin Burns Virginian. I use both DI and PA – the guitars go into a board with a Lehle RMI Acouswitch IQ DI that feeds an AER Compact 60 III BK guitar amp and into a Fishman Aura Spectrum DI that feeds the PA. Then there's a loop with T-Rex Engineering FX: a Comp-Nova compressor, a Duck Tail delay, a Tremster tremolo and Karma Boost. I play fingerstyle, but also use a pick, and have a beautiful Lakewood D-48 custom with a dynamic pick for my slide work. I'm also in love with my new Larson Prairie State SJ (Style 2 and 3) guitars, which I am using on stage for all my different tunings – I use open E, Delta G, minor tunings, DADGAD and EEEEEBE. I am currently touring the new album in Germany, Netherlands and France and making plans for UK and US dates. What have I learned most as a musician? The important notes are the ones you don't play.

www.carlcarlton.com





RICH MCMAHON

STYLE... (CONTEMPORARY FOLK)

I became a professional musician in my 30s, when desperation and a desire to express something drove me to give up my job and put myself out there. I'm a singer-songwriter, guitarist and above all a music fan.

I play contemporary folk with Irish, Americana and pop influences. My songs are inspired by my English/Irish background, people I meet, my values and beliefs. The theme of my new album, *Songs Of Exile, Love And Dissent*, is very much in the title. In any relationship, whether personal or with your country, you go through a range of emotions – I miss you, I love you, I disagree with you. That's what I try to put across. Great credit for the album should go to my producer Gerry Diver, who played guitar on several tracks. I recorded the vocals and guitars at home in Birmingham, and the strings and other instruments in Gerry's studio in London. It's hard to pick a favourite track, but 'Beyond Borders' stretches me vocally, has a beautiful arrangement and its theme of immigration and prejudice is particularly relevant in our current political climate. I used my trusty old Taylor 414ce on the album – it's been my main gigging guitar for a few years. I usually put it through an AER Compact 60 acoustic amp, which really brings out its warmth. I still enjoy playing my first Taylor, a 210 – I recently had it fitted with a Fishman pickup and it sounds great – and I've got an Epiphone EJ-200CE jumbo cutaway acoustic, natural wood. My style is quite chord-based and percussive. Over the years I've relied on the pick and a handful of chords, but of late I've been getting those fingers working a bit more and playing less conventional chords. *Songs Of Exile, Love And Dissent* launches in March, and I have recently put together a new show based around those themes, which I will be touring in the UK, Ireland and Europe in the spring and summer.

www.richmcmahon.com

DAN WEBSTER

STYLE... (FOLK/AMERICANA)



I'm mostly a storyteller, though it's not planned, it's just what comes when I write. A singer-songwriter, guitarist and producer living in York, I am influenced by both English and American music – Paul Simon, Tom Paxton, Donovan, Neil Finn, Ryan Adams, Counting Crows, Bob Dylan, Josh Ritter – and I think that comes through in my writing and productions. I guess my new album, *The Tin Man*, is about journeys, loss and hope. My favourite track is 'One To Remember'. A true story, the lesson I was taught that night will stay with me because I felt compelled to write about it. I always write and perform with an acoustic guitar. I have a late 80s or early 90s Larrivee – it's either an LJ-05 or an L-05. They're jumbo-sized, but not as deep. It has a lovely balanced, controlled tone. I used it when tracking my guitar parts on the album. I also have a Maton CW80 CE. These guitars are underrated – they're fantastic. Its AP5 pickup may not be the most reliable (I'm on my second), but it has to be one of the best on the market. I'm mainly self-taught, though I have had a couple of lessons, and I play every day – both pick and fingerstyle. I think I'm a better producer and guitar player now – I've learned not to judge. Music is a complex thing. Just because it doesn't do it for you, it doesn't mean it doesn't do it.

www.danwebster.co.uk

LINNEA OLSSON

STYLE... (POP)

I come from Sweden and I'm a composer, cellist and singer. I call my music fantasy cello pop. My songs are inspired by stuff that happens in my life and other people's lives. I make up a lot of the lyrics as I go. Most of my songs start with a loop that I make on the cello through my Line 6 DL4 pedal. I almost always use a delay. Then I loop around on that, trying out different melodies and fragments, both on cello and vocals. I record everything in GarageBand, or on my iPhone. My first album, *Ah!*, was just cello and darbuka drum, but for the new album, *Breaking And Shaking*, I felt I needed more rhythm and determination, so I brought in two other musicians, Fredrik Gicken Johansson and my brother Povel, on guitars, bass, drums and synths. It was so much fun recording with them. If there is a theme to the album, it's movement. I want to move more to my music than before, and I would like to do more music videos. I like the editing part, which I find creative. I met Peter Gabriel through my friend Ane Brun, who's toured a lot with him. It's been helpful to be the opening act on his shows, getting to steal the ears from his warm and music-loving audience. I also perform in Peter's band, which is fun. It's inspiring to play with musicians that have so much routine. They still have the joy of the music, but are so cool with everything. I took cello lessons from six to 24, all the way up to music college in Stockholm where I got a bachelor's degree. I play a Yamaha electric cello and a German cello, made around 1890. The German cello has a warm and soft, fuzzy sound, which reminds me of my own vocal, and blends with my singing voice well. The secret of good playing? Listen, listen, listen, all the time.

www.linneaolsson.net





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LITTLE BIG TOWN

PAIN KILLER

(CAPITOL/DECCA)



Setting the gimmicks of 'Day Drinking' aside, this is an album full of lyrical twists and sensational vocal harmonies. Little Big Town hit the big time, says Guy Little

TRACKLIST

- 1 Quit Breaking Up With Me
- 2 Day Drinking
- 3 Tumble And Fall
- 4 Pain Killer
- 5 Girl Crush
- 6 Faster Gun
- 7 Good People
- 8 Stay All Night
- 9 Save Your Sin
- 10 Live Forever
- 11 Thing You Don't Think About
- 12 Turn The Lights On
- 13 Silver And Gold

Little Big Town's sixth album, *Pain Killer*, is one with an unmistakable pop/rock slant, and one in which comparisons to Fleetwood Mac are easily justified. That's not just because two of the band members are married, or down to the love drenched subject matter, but because of the rampant vocal harmonies and Buckingham-esque guitar licks on tracks such as 'Save Your Sin' and the delicate echo of 'Live Forever' – the latter of which could've easily been a *Rumours* outtake.

The quartet, fresh from a Country Music Association gong for best vocal group, extend their musical boundaries on *Pain Killer* and play into the rock sensibility without losing any of their award-winning identity.

The crunching guitars and impeccable soaring harmonies are as defining as ever. It's a record laced with pop, rock, country, and most things in between, yet its sound stays organised and thrilling through all 13 tracks. If you're suffering from a "bro country" overdose, LBT provide the antidote.

The four-piece group – Karen Fairchild, Phillip Sweet, Kimberly Schlapman, Jimi Westbrook – have been together for 15 years, and garnered many an award, kicking out hits left, right and centre ('Pontoon',



'Tornado', 'Good As Gone', 'Bring It On Home', 'Little White Church'), and judging by the quality of the songwriting collaborations on *Pain Killer*, that trend isn't ready to subside.

Lead single 'Day Drinking', while gimmicky, proves to be the gateway



into an album LBT fans have been waiting for. While all four members take their turn at lead vocals, it's Fairchild who really shines. Wailing like a scorned lover taken for granted on 'Things You Don't Think About', and on 'Girl Crush' she reveals a fiery

side brimming with jealous longing: "I want to kiss her lips because they taste like you". More yearning and heartbreak follows with Jimi's blazing tenor on 'Faster Gun'.

Jay Joyce (Eric Church, Amos Lee, Emmylou Harris, Cage The Elephant),



LBT on writing Pain Killer

Q&A

'We decided not to lock ourselves into writing as a group. We wanted

a more relaxed and free approach,' says Karen Fairchild. 'There was no pressure to write as certain groups at certain times. We followed the inspiration instead of forcing it out. I don't know that we would have written 'Tumble and Fall' if the boys were in the room, though. The writing process on that song was very therapeutic for all of us girls. Just as 'Faster Gun' is a guys' song, it probably wouldn't have turned out the same way if the girls had been in the room at that time.'

'Jay [Joyce, producer] is such an amazing, creative person to work with,' says Jimi Westbrook. 'He takes you to places you don't expect to go and you feel a lot of freedom in that.'

who also took charge of the band's wildly successful 2012 record *Tornado*, was once again at the helm, and although the record has its forlorn moments, there's an in-your-face swagger to it. Whether that's shining through on tracks like 'Quit Breaking Up With Me' and 'Save Your Sin', or a subtle middle finger in the quieter moments, of which there are a few, it's undeniable. When the music gets loud you'll sure as hell know about it thanks to the assured delivery of the falsetto vocal lines and screaming guitar solos, but there's the country twang the traditionalists will be craving on 'Stay All Night' and the swinging rhythms of 'Good People', with the Dobro making an appearance for good measure.

LBT co-wrote eight of the tracks and the songwriting really does prove heavyweight on 'Tumble and Fall' and the shimmering tones of 'Live Forever'. It's a tour-de-force of musicianship as uninhibited as their creative process – and, yes, it's 16 years too late, but there's no filler on *Pain Killer*.

Little Big Town's Pain Killer is out now.

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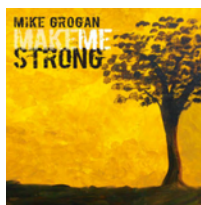
Josh Tillman has come up with an album of epic sweeping soundscapes on *I Love You Honeybear* that would make Brian Wilson proud. He calls the sounds “deranged schmaltz” and it’s a fair description



FATHER JOHN MISTY *I LOVE YOU HONEYBEAR*

www.fatherjohnmisty.com

So here's a man with a sense of humour. Josh Tillman, aka Father John Misty, was former drummer with Fleet Foxes, an outfit famed for their elegant harmonies and acoustic arrangements. But you never know where you are with drummers, and given his head and presumably the resources, Josh has come up with an album of epic sweeping soundscapes, that would make Brian Wilson proud. He calls the sounds “deranged schmaltz” and it’s a fair description. After the huge drum sound and sweeping strings of the title track, by the time ‘True Affection’ weighs in at track three, Josh weirdly admitting “I just love the kind of woman who can walk over a man” it’s difficult not to be impressed by the sheer majesty of the proceedings. File under radio friendly sub Beach Boys Pop. **JP**



MIKE GROGAN *MAKE ME STRONG*

www.mikegrogan.co.uk

Mike Grogan's enlisted a slew of great musicians to help him out on this album, including Miranda Sykes, Phil Beer, and Phil Henry, the latter playing some inspired Dobro throughout. It's a varied bag, and given the strong Show Of Hands connection, it's no surprise to find that when Mark sings 'Nelson's Blood', a lusty stomping folk anthem with Phil Beer working up a storm on the fiddle, there's more than a nod to SOH's musical book. But there's a lot to intrigue, from the radio friendly 'Will We Dance' and 'Shackled In Love', to the growling 'Black Dog' with Phil Henry's eerie harmonica lending an appropriate air of menace. And the story of John Pounds, a crippled Portsmouth dock worker voted the town's Man Of The Millennium in 1999, is a piece of folk music destined to be around for a while. **JP**



AMELIA CURRAN *THEY PROMISED YOU MERCY*

www.ameliacurran.com

To receive a Canadian music Juno award usually means you're something pretty special, and Newfoundland based songstress Amelia Curran is proving that to be the case. Producer Michael Philip Wojeweda who's masterminded the project, comes up with minimal arrangements that are right out of the Daniel Lanois manual leaving Amelia's beautifully conversational voice and unerring sense of melody to reign. Highlights have to be the title track with its poppy chorus line and distant slide guitar, the sort of song that might soon be coming out of a radio near you, and the slow measured acoustic strum of 'Coming For You' where Amelia sings “I'm coming for you like the driving rain, like a storm unchained.” She might not break your heart, but she may come near it. **JP**



THE SWEET LOWDOWN *CHASING THE SUN*

www.thesweetlowdown.ca

This trio of young ladies play what they're happy to describe as “mountain music” – in their case, the peaks that surround their home in the Canadian Northwest. With guitar, banjo and fiddle in the mix, it follows that what's about to burst forth from the hi-fi is unlikely to be some kind of Seattle grunge, but it's great to discover that the girls twist on their old timey bluegrass roots place them squarely in a field of one. At the heart of their sound are tantalising harmonies and restrained instrumentation, a glorious uplifting mix on the opening 'River Winding Down', harmonies that recall the glory days of the Roches. The tragedy of Japan's Fukushima nuclear plant is remembered in the haunting 'Fallout', and Miriam Sonstene's song 'Leaving', is an emotion-wracked peon which all road worn musicians will surely identify. Sweet indeed. **JP**



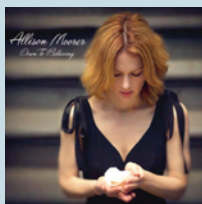
There's nothing like a marital hiatus to set the creative juices bubbling. And so when Allison Moorer sings "Hell, life's too short to wake up every day without someone" on the title track, with ex-hubbie Steve Earle bringing out a blues album, it's no surprise to find that on this latest release, Alison's got the cold sweat blues too



DOM FLEMONS PROSPECT HILL

www.domflemons.com

Remember the *Black And White Minstrel Show*? It was dreadful but hugely popular 60s TV show, with grinning dancers pretending to strum banjos, prancing around singing songs about bales of cotton. Well, on this showing, Mr Flemons might have provided the soundtrack. In fairness, he's putting paid to the gripe that younger Afro-American musicians aren't keeping the music alive, but this is the kind of stuff you'll hear droning from Memphis to Miami. Peddling a mix of good time Hokum music, the first few tracks include a limp take of 'Polly Put The Kettle On', a sugar sweet 'But They Got It Fixed', and it's not until Guy Davis weighs in with some growling harmonica on the instrumental 'Georgia Drumbeat', that there's even a hint of serious intent. It's not that it's bad, but if you can't play the blues, don't mess with it. **JP**



ALLISON MOORER DOWN TO BELIEVING

www.alisonmoorer.com

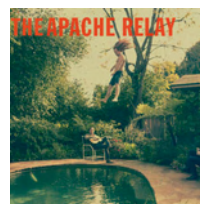
As any fan of Bob Dylan's *Blood On The Tracks* will know, there's nothing like a marital hiatus to set the creative juices bubbling. And so when Allison Moorer sings "Hell, life's too short to wake up every day without someone" on the title track, with ex-hubbie Steve Earle bringing out a blues album, it's no surprise to find that on this latest release, Alison's got the cold sweat blues too. But that's not to say there's even a hint of dirge here. Riffing chiming guitars kick off the album with 'Like It Used To Be', a glorious slice of electric Americana that could be straight out of vintage Fleetwood Mac. Inevitably there's a bit of mild mud slinging around on songs like 'Tear Me Apart' and 'If I Were Stronger', but Allison's glorious aching voice anaesthetises any hint of self-pity, turning this into one heck of a soulful album. **JP**



EYES FOR GERTRUDE RESIDENTIAL BLISS

www.eyesforgertrude.com

Produced by Canadian svengali Ben Mink, whose past production successes include K.D. Lang, it's no surprise to find that it's the Patsy Cline/Lang influence that stalks this release by Hannah and Chantelle, the two ex-Falmouth music college students that make up Eyes For Gertrude. And it's an impressive piece of work, especially on tracks like 'History', where after a neo classical piano introduction, the girls vocals intertwine in a sensual miasma that recalls the dreamy glory days of Kate Bush. If there's a gripe, it's that Mink's production is at times top heavy, and tracks like 'The Boatman' — one of the album's defining moments — would benefit from more space to breath. The girls' soft yearning voices win through every time. **JP**



THE APACHE RELAY THE APACHE RELAY

www.theapacherelay.com

With a name like The Apache Relay, the unwary listener might well be expecting some kind of gritty, rootsy, melange harking back to the days when Geronimo ruled the plains. Well, they'd be wrong. Instead, sweeping strings and tangy harmonies kick off an album into which Nashville has obviously poured its finest production skills to come up with the kind of emasculated pop that Phil Spector would have binned. And when Michael Ford sings "I've got a terrible feeling" on the song of the same name, you can't help wondering whether he's heard his own out takes. The band has apparently toured with Mumford & Sons, so there must be hope, but on this showing it's all pretty disposable. Back to the drawing board for The Apache Relay, then. **JP**

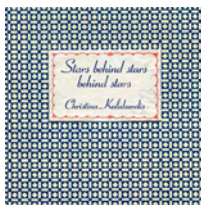


FALSE LIGHTS

SALVOR

www.falselightscamp.com

Only jazz/rock has spawned as many dodgy recordings as that particular devil's spawn that is folk/rock. But when it's in the hands of two talented young singers like Jim Moray and Sam Carter, both of whom have received BBC folk awards, then the guys deserve to be cut some slack. That said, it's probably best to suspend any preconceptions. Songs like 'Polly On The Shore' and 'The Banks Of Newfoundland' might tread familiar folk paths, but the introduction to the latter with its chiming guitar intro and spanking drums, could be a Mark Knopfler outtake. Things get pretty heavy on 'Skewball', an intriguing mix of electric guitar, feedback and melodeons, kind of Radiohead meets Black Sabbath, before the light relief of Moss Rutter's fiddle into the jig a jig 'Charlesworth Hornpipe.' Bursting with testosterone, it's a great album. **JP**



CHRISTINA KULUKUNDIS

STARS BEHIND STARS BEHIND STARS

www.christinaband.com

Listening to Christina Kulukundis, it's almost impossible to believe the lady hails from the Brendon hills of Worcester, rather than the Blue Ridge mountains of Kentucky. Backed by a bunch of guys with serious provenance, including Fairport Convention's Chris Leslie, whose fiddle sounds particularly down home on the wistful 'Big Baby Blues', Christina's got one of those classic Dolly Parton meets Emmylou Harris voices, long on melody but occasionally short on emotion. There's not a lot of sweat being expounded here, the ensemble rarely getting out of second gear, but it allows Christina's voice to shine on songs like the folk ballad 'Roberton Moor', and the dark banjo led 'Sweet Fruit'. Then it's all change for the smooth jazz inflected title track, a song on which the lady sounds so at home, you can't help wondering why she didn't record more in this vein. **JP**



QRISTINA AND QUINN BACHAND

LITTLE HINGES

www.qbachand.com

"It's not what you've been given, it's what you do with what you've got," a truism Qristina Bachand sings on this album by this young talented brother and sister from Victoria British Columbia. Divided in two halves, the first six tracks trawl traditional influences, but infiltrated with fairy dust by the use of cunning sonic devices like Josh Dixon's paint can drumming on Dominic Behan's 'Crooked Jack', a song learnt from the great Dick Gaughan. After the ethereal ambient title track, the remaining seven tracks push the Bachand's traditional roots into darker territory, Qristina's charismatic vocals handling the jazz inflected 'Listen' as easily as the eerie beauty of the chilling child murder ballad 'Three Little Babes'. **JP**

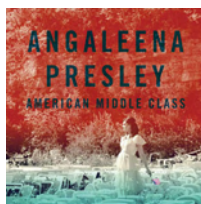


BLUEFLINT

STORIES FROM HOME

www.blueflint.org.uk

As you'd expect, there's a decidedly earthy air to the third album by this Scottish banjo wielding duo, Deborah Arnott and Claire Nelson. With a sleeve depicting the less engaging sides of city life — high rise apartments, and shuttered deserted precincts — it's a relief to find that Blueflint's songs speak of hope, the birth of a child on 'Little Stranger' and Claire Nelson asking, "Just give me wings and I'll fly from here" on the tale of the 'Hawk and Eagle'. Walking a tightrope between their traditional Scottish roots and influences of Americana, the pair come up with some sublime harmonies on the gentle 'Patch Of Green', before a Saturday night hoe down on the rattling 'Seasons Are Changing'. There's nothing to set the world alight, but Blueflint sound like the kind of people you'd enjoy watching at your local open mic night. **JP**



ANGALEENA PRESLEY

AMERICAN MIDDLE CLASS

www.angeleenapresley.com

"My mama ain't none too happy about me spreading my business around but I have to do it," says this Kentucky coal miner's daughter, and with songs about unexpected pregnancies, drug abuse and economic meltdowns, it's easy to see why. Of course, new country is littered with sassy gals singing about the pitfalls of the American dream, but whether standing in line at the grocery store or admitting, "When you hit bottom you've got more falling to do" on 'Surrender', Ms. Presley has come up with some songs that hit home with the power of a James Lee Burke novel. Factor in her gorgeous yearning voice, down to every strummed G chord, soft steel guitar whine and reverberated tremolo bass line, this is a lady to fall in love with. Oh — a great name, too, right? **JP**



MISNER & SMITH

SEVEN HOUR STORM

www.misnerandsmith.com

Misner and Smith reckon their music is a search for meaning, yearning for a connection, and to relish in mystery and rejoice in creation. Not much to live up to then, eh? Certainly, if you close your eyes and listen to Sam Misner singing 'Seven Hour Storm', you could be listening to Paul Simon, the same fluttering delicate guitar and relaxed vocal lines that peter off in that Simon-esque way. Together with Megan Smith, who holds down the role of upright bass and a myriad of other instruments great and small, the pair work their way through 11 songs that are exquisitely produced, nary a note or harmony out of place, but all the notable for their blandness. Ultimately it's all very good, but you've kinda got to think Hatha yoga and whole grain rice. **JP**



Dan's forte is the clawhammer style which he shows off to fine advantage on tracks like 'With A Memory Like Man' and 'Wobbly Trolley' — a blistering Irish sounding duet he zips through with Patsy Reid on fiddle



ANTHONY D'AMATO THE SHIPWRECK FROM THE SHORE

www.AnthonyDamatoMusic.com

This East Coast singer-songwriter's major-label debut follows a couple of DIY efforts from his Princeton University dorm-room. It seems he learned his lyric-writing trade working with (Pulitzer Prize-winning poet) Paul Muldoon — and it shows. The tunes aren't bad, either. The hook-laden 'Back, Back, Back' channels his idol, Mavis Staples and the soul influence extends further through the Fender Rhodes-led, Muscle Shoals sway of 'Good And Ready' into 10 smart, instantly likeable originals with not a dud track in sight. Opener, 'Was A Time' winningly combines whacking snare-drum with tinkling glockenspiel and Dylan-esque harmonica, the ethereal shimmer of 'Middle Ground' conjures Bon Iver and Fleet Foxes while 'No Not Tonight' re-invents The Band (on steroids). **SB**



DAN WALSH INCIDENTS & ACCIDENTS

www.danwalshbanjo.co.uk

Banjo is one of those instruments you either love or hate — there's no middle ground. Now whether he's the "finest" banjo player in the UK as his blurb suggests, Dan Walsh is a guy who knows his way around five strings. Dan's forte is the clawhammer style which he shows off to fine advantage on tracks like 'With A Memory Like Man' and 'Wobbly Trolley' — a blistering Irish sounding duet he zips through with Patsy Reid adding fiddle. Continually ringing the changes, 'Whiplash Reel' with its slurred fretboard slides is a Ravi Shankar-style workout, 'Lost Rambler' a frenetic bluegrass blow out, the whole work is neatly dovetailed alongside a handful of Dan's self-penned songs. Bela Fleck probably doesn't need to worry right now, but to hold the listener in suspense on an album with a banjo to the fore is no mean feat. **JP**



CAMERON BLAKE ALONE ON THE WORLD STAGE

www.cameronblakemusic.com

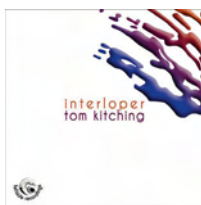
This quiet, reflective hour of solo voice and acoustic guitar (with a bit of piano thrown in for good measure) could be a time capsule from the Greenwich Village coffee-house scene of the early 60s. Hailing from Grand Rapids, Michigan, the classically-trained Blake delivers this fifth album of social and political commentaries conjuring the story-telling spirits of Tom Paxton and Gordon Lightfoot; more gentle persuasion than strident polemic via grown-up lyrics and classic, old-school melodic structure. The weary elegance of 'The Fisherman' evokes early Leonard Cohen, the plaintive 'Detroit' is a hymn to a broken city trying to revive itself and the stand-out, lost-love-lament, 'Wild Blue Garden' tips a hat to US folk greats Jim Croce and John Gorka. **SB**



I DRAW SLOW WHITE WAVE CHAPEL

www.idrawslow.com

A dozen originals (plus the inevitable traditional arrangement) from a Dublin-based five-piece currently making their name on the US festival circuit. Said Trad, 'Don't Cry My Honey', owing much to the headlong, hoe-down spirit of Carolina Chocolate Drops, is by far the best thing here and, with the notable exception of bluegrass fiddle-fest, 'Bread & Butter', is the only time this clearly-talented bunch really seems to kick back and go for it. Guided by veteran producer Brian Masterson (Van Morrison, The Chieftains, Norah Jones) it's clear from the off that we're a lot closer to Nashville than Leinster here, and while the pared-down 'Souvenirs' and 'Springtime' offer moments of intrigue, the beige Celtic/country-hybrid elsewhere never really hits the mark you feel it should. **SB**



TOM KITCHING

INTERLOPER

www.tomkitching.co.uk

A fast-rising name in the fiddle world (there's a lot of talented competition out there too) and hailing from the trad-folk heartlands of Macclesfield, Kitching takes time out from Pilgrim's Way and duo-duties with Gren Bartley to deliver an exuberant, expressive solo debut buoyed by the intriguing backing combination of Norwegian latmandola, woodwind and drums (plus Andy Cutting guesting on accordion). It's a contemporary take on an English folk tradition that's historically more elusive than its ubiquitous Celtic cousin and while there's often a sense of this music communicating better in a live setting, from the jaunty, time-slipping opener, 'Ruffy Tufty', onwards, this fine set of jigs, reels and Morris tunes throws welcome new light into an oft-neglected corner of music. **SB**



AWNA TEIXEIRA

WILD ONE

www.hazytales.me

A second full-length album from the erstwhile (Canadian roots outfit) Po' Girl and Toronto-native, multi-instrumentalist singer-songwriter. Emmylou Harris's *Wrecking Ball* vibe is the touchstone here, with slow-burn opener 'The Light In You' floating ethereally into 'Blue Heart On Your Sleeve' and through the self-contradictingly melancholy title track. Teixeira favours loose song structures underpinned by drifting, dreamlike backing vocals (from 'Oh, Susanna'); delicate slow-paced balladry (rarely extending beyond second gear) as conveyed by the stately, elegance of 'Freedom Hunter', in particular. The Stevie Nicks-alike 'Bees And Things' and 'A Sailor's Dream' briefly up the tempo if not the prevailing mood and sombre, fatalistic tone deeply influenced by the philosophy and sounds of Canada's indigenous First Nation tribes. **SB**



MO EVANS

SPILLED MY LOVE

www.twitter.com/moevansmusic

Son of Sam (Brown) and grandson of Joe (musical talent is clearly in the genes) Evans is already no stranger to the festival circuit having supported Bonnie Tyler in front of 100,000 people at Silverstone last year. It would be easy to label this as another example of a choirboy-voiced kid with an acoustic guitar and a Jeff Buckley fixation but closer inspection reveals strong, distinctive material that lifts this debut outing above that endlessly-multiplying sub-genre. While 'Close My Eyes' and 'Can't Come Any Closer' demonstrate a penchant for full-on, cinematic balladry, it's the more relaxed, swelling orchestral pop of closer 'You Wanted Love' that really hits the mark. Maybe — hopefully — we'll get more of that on the upcoming full-length album from him. **SB**



DENGUE FEVER

THE DEEPEST LAKE

www.denguefevermusic.com

Cambodian rock (by way of Los Angeles) from the undisputed master-purveyors of psych-surf, Khmer-language, Afro-pop; admittedly a bit of a narrow genre, right? From the delightfully cheesy opener, 'Tokay' (probably not an ode to the Hungarian tippale of that name though) it's all smile-inducing, foot-tapping stuff on offer here; the cheerfully daft, 'No Sudden Moves' conjures the soundtrack to a martial-arts Austin Powers spin-off, 'Rom Say Sok' is Talking Heads via The Jetsons and there's a knowing nod to Ventures-style twang on 'Deepest Lake On The Planet'. The band's 60s, West Coast psychedelia leaning are well to the fore on 'Cardboard Castles' and 'Vacant Lot' while, paradoxically, 'Still Waters Run Deep' hurtles along like a mad, Phnom Penh moto-taxi. **SB**



MIRIAM JONES

BETWEEN GREEN AND GONE

www.miriamjones.bandcamp.com

British Columbia-native, singer-songwriter Jones explores that seam of classy, confident country-pop so expertly mined by the likes of Alison Moorer and Shelby Lynne. This third, full-length studio album, recorded in the UK by Fairports/Billy Bragg producer, Simon Edwards (doubling on bass and mandolin duty) with the ever-safe hands of Calum McColl lending guitar support throughout, showcases ten original vignettes of lovelorn, roots balladry; all hurt, heartbreak and good women wronged. The soulful, radio-friendly, 'Cracks' sets the tone and while 'Given All' and 'Missed You' shift the gears (downwards) into plaintive, world-weary introspection, Jones proves most appealing via the deceptively simple vibe of 'Don't Be Hard On Me' and the laid-back, wistfully-optimistic closer, 'Stay'. **SB**



RICH MCMAHON

SONGS OF EXILE, LOVE & DISSENT

www.richmcmahon.com

This first (proper, if you will) studio album won't trouble many charts but "folk-club" purists left stranded by the tide of over-produced younger, lesser talents will certainly love it. Coming late to a musical career, but armed with a gift for witty, erudite lyrics and a voice part Christy Moore, part Paul Brady, McMahon instantly establishes himself as both utterly modern and firmly in the tradition of timeless, Irish story-telling balladry — no mean feat. The sour, cynical observation of 'The Barman's Tale' heralds a folk-club staple in the making, both 'Dissenters' and the plea for (social, racial and political) harmony of 'Inbetweenland' have a distinct Waterboys feel and it would be hard to find a better drunken singalong anywhere than on 'My Beautiful Broken Guitar'. **SB**



DAN WEBSTER

THE TIN MAN

www.danwebster.co.uk

Dan Webster's music veers from Damien Rice through country right to something close to traditional folk, all of it executed with the utmost skill and care. There are moments where *Tin Man* really catches fire; 'Gold and Tin' is a bittersweet paen to love, loss and war for instance, but the variety on this album means that overall, it's rather uneven. It feels as though Webster could make a really good album if he focused on his singer-songwriter persona, but this feels like three EPs by three different artists. It is nearly very good. Do check it out, though. **SW**



SNOWAPPLE

ILLUSION

www.snowapple.nl

Have you ever wondered what Dutch folk meets pop would be like? Or what would happen to songs with a country feel if you gave them a bit of a Euro twist? Of course you have, so here we have it... Snowapple is here to answer these questions, and the results are bright, breezy, harmony laden tunes to cheer the heart, with that little splodge of something outside our Brit/American mainstream that makes artists like Bjork or The Cardigans so beguiling. Three Dutch girls, a diverse range of instrumentation and a style at once familiar and unexpected makes *Illusion* an album that endures longer than its poppy impact would imply. **SW**



LIZ OWEN

NOW I KNOW

www.lizowenmusic.co.uk

'Now I Know' is Lancashire singer/songwriter Liz Owen's debut EP, and it'll leave you wanting a full album. One moment there's dexterous fingerstyle, the next it's confrontational rock and roll redolent of a solo acoustic Skunk Anansie, then she's dirging over a chugging bass-heavy picking pattern. What all of it has in common is a sonorous oboe of a voice, by turns soft and winsome or hard-edged and in your face, and songs which rip the lid of her heart and empty it out on your duvet cover. Six songs isn't enough. **SW**



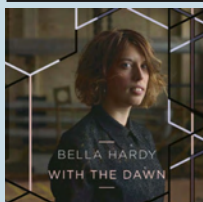
BLIND WILLIES

EVERY DAY IS JUDGEMENT DAY

www.blindwillies.net

Blind Willies are apparently an Americana act from San Francisco, but in fact, that term doesn't begin to contain the riotous mix of klezmer, jazz, gypsy punk and blues the band throw at you. Binding it all together is the abrasive, political, challenging songwriting of Alexei Wajchman, who takes no prisoners and doesn't flinch from challenging you with his lyrics. Those songs are driven, though, by a melange of instrumentation including cello, accordion, violin, flute and trumpet. The Blind Willies will energise you, challenge you, and make you dance — and that's a rare combination. **SW**

Occasionally, an album comes along that seems to tap a direct line into the performer's inner psyche, and this is one of them. Bella's seventh album, and her first since being named BBC Radio 2's Folk Singer of 2014, finds her turning her back on the traditional influences of her previous work



BELLA HARDY

WITH THE DAWN

www.bellahardy.com

"Should I hide a broken heart, or let the world tear me apart again?" Bella Hardy sings at the opening of 'The Only Thing To Do'; lines that might seem maudlin were they clearly not so heartfelt. Occasionally, an album will come along that seems to tap a direct line into the performer's inner psyche — and *With The Dawn* from Bella Hardy is certainly one of them. Bella's seventh album, and her first since being named BBC Radio 2's Folk Singer of 2014, finds her turning her back on the traditional influences of her previous work, and instead documenting a year of her life in song. And on this showing she's probably glad it's over, but luckily, it's inspired her to come up with songs like 'First Light Of Morning', which from the first fractured clanks of banjo, is a moment of spell binding beauty. **JP**

Sarah McQuaid

S www.sarahmcquaid.com

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Walking Into White



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*"This feels like I've been
playing it all my life"*

The Making Of...

RUMOURS

We look back at Fleetwood Mac's seminal album and assess its enduring appeal as the group is set to tour in 2015, including a headline slot at the Isle of Wight Festival.

Words by Andy Hughes

Any music collector remembers the time they first heard a song that led to an album purchase that still gives value for money decades later. I recall, with complete clarity, Bob Harris as he presented the BBC's *The Old Grey Whistle Test* introducing the first play of 'The Chain'. The next day *Rumours* was released, and I was in my local record shop buying the album – it remains one of the most played albums I own.

Back in the 1970s, before the advent of the internet, album purchases were an event. You bought your album, took it home, took it out of its sleeve, put it on the turntable, and sat and paid attention as it played. There was never the notion of doing anything else but listening and absorbing the music, and music was made with that attitude in mind. I played 'The Chain' over and over again, captivated by the sound of Stevie Nicks' voice and the guitar interplay that Lindsey Buckingham used to enhance

its ethereal appeal. From there, I moved onto 'Gold Dust Woman', with a similar structure of multi-tracked acoustic guitar, sparse percussion, minor chords, and that haunting voice. Another story of a broken heart delivered with that Fleetwood Mac trademark of authenticity – this was music made by people who knew of what they sang and played. And know it they did, all of them, with recent and raw experiences of heartbreak, betrayal and loss. The problem for the band was not that they

In terms of influence, Fleetwood Mac, and in particular guitarist Lindsey Buckingham, has gone on to directly affect the styles and writing of millions of guitarists and songwriters the world over





The vigour and pleasure Fleetwood Mac bring to their live shows remains undiminished, along with the realisation that the band itself, and the music they have made, is greater than the fights and feuds that they endured making it

brought their external traumas into the studio and wrote and sang about them surrounded by the unique comfort and support that a band atmosphere offers. The opposite applied – the band were each other’s heartbreakers, betrayers, life-shatterers, and as Christine McVie memorably pointed out at the time: ‘Most people go to work for a rest from the pressure and strain of a breakup, we went to work with the people who were causing ours, and our work was to sing and play about it all day every day.’

This is the thread that runs through *Rumours* – it is that in-built sense of naked emotion that bleeds out of the singing and playing that reaches out to generations of music fans. It’s that timeless feel for love and loss that makes *Rumours* one of the greatest albums about romance and loneliness that has ever been made. Its success made Fleetwood Mac a cultural phenomenon.

THE BACKGROUND

A lot of people imagine that when Fleetwood Mac was sinking slowly to the bottom of their commercial career in the early 1970s that the Californian duo of Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie

Nicks arrived, saved the band, recorded *Rumours*, and the rest is history. The truth is somewhat different.

In terms of career trauma, Fleetwood Mac had already endured enough for several bands – starting with the departure of their founder guitarist, the brilliant Peter Green, who left the band after numerous run-ins with various narcotics (notably a bad acid trip) and prolonged mental illness. Guitarist Danny Kirwan, who played all the guitar parts on the band’s hit single ‘Albatross’ left the band following sustained alcohol abuse and periods of homelessness. Guitarist Jeremy Spencer left the band’s hotel to buy cigarettes while they were on an American tour and never returned; he joined the religious cult the Children of God following a chance encounter with one of their “disciples” on Hollywood Boulevard. It’s testament to the ongoing bottomless tenacity of founders Mick Fleetwood and John McVie that the band never gave up hope.

The famed Californian sound of Fleetwood Mac actually began with the inclusion of guitarist Bob Welch who joined the band in 1971, and it



Rumours – Track by track

The *Rumours* album (there is no title track – John McVie suggested a change from the planned title of ‘Don’t Stop’) is a groundbreaking mix in terms of musicality and lyrical honesty. The varying writing styles of the main composers, and the arrangement skills of Lindsey Buckingham have ensured that the album’s initial impact remains largely intact after countless hearings. The variety of song styles and the unique sounds of the three singers combine to create a sound that is both unique and immediately identifiable – the hallmarks of any great record.

■ ‘SECOND HAND NEWS’

From the crescendo of chiming acoustic guitar to the Celtic percussion that Lindsey Buckingham and Mick Fleetwood use to launch into the album, the band’s current situation is stated loud and clear. “I know there’s nothing to say, someone has taken my place...” sings Buckingham, the jaunty beat and clattering drums directly in contrast to the heart-break of a man who has lost the love of his life.

■ ‘DREAMS’

John McVie’s loping bass and Christine McVie’s funky keyboards accompany Nicks as she follows the emotional pattern set by the previous song. “Now here you go again, you say you want your freedom, well who am I to keep you down?” The song unfolds as a warning that her ex-lover will come to regret and want again the love they had. With the line, “Players only love you when they’re playing...” Lindsey Buckingham is the man she addresses, her metaphor barely hiding the biting regret and anguish she brings to her vocal.

■ ‘NEVER GOING BACK AGAIN’

Lindsey Buckingham’s double-tracked Dobro and sweet harmonies from Nicks and McVie underscore the unique vocal appeal of this album, the three disparate voices which blend together with such beauty run through the album in an understated style that adds California lushness of sound that was such a provocative prod to the soon-come punk revolution just around the corner.

■ ‘DON’T STOP’

Adopted by Bill Clinton as his presidential campaign song, the jaunty pub-piano roll of Christine McVie’s rare note of optimism prevents *Rumours* from sinking into an entire morass of despair, and Buckingham’s upper-register electric guitar solo sounds positively joyous compared with the rest of the record’s subject matter.

■ ‘GO YOUR OWN WAY’

The strongest track on the album, and the most poignant, harmonised again by the three singers, with John McVie’s bass and Mick Fleetwood’s heavy percussion punching out the musical message while the vocals spell out yet again



It's that timeless feel for love and loss that makes *Rumours* one of the greatest albums about romance and loneliness that has ever been made. Its success made Fleetwood Mac a cultural phenomenon

was at his urging in 1974 that Mick Fleetwood and the bass and keyboards, husband and wife John and Christine McVie, relocated to Los Angeles to try to resurrect their fading band's career. Welch is under-credited for his part in moving the band on, not only physically but also musically to California. He left the band in 1974 and eventually enjoyed a successful solo career before adding to the Fleetwood Mac hall of tragedy by committing suicide in June 2012.

Seeking a studio to record the next album, Fleetwood Mac travelled to Sound City and heard a demo from Buckingham and Nicks, an American duo who were recording in the studio next door. Such are the coincidences that lead to massive changes in lives and careers – Fleetwood was played the songs simply to demonstrate the studio facilities, but something about the sound intrigued him. When guitarist Welch quit the band at the end of the next tour,

the remaining band members decided to try out Lindsey Buckingham as their new guitarist. Buckingham insisted he and Nicks were a package, and the duo were duly signed. The eponymous tenth album for Fleetwood Mac turned them from a struggling British blues band into a fully-fledged AOR pop-rock band with platinum status and an eight-figure bank balance to go along. The band had everything going for them; it finally looked as though all their problems and heartaches were over. If only...

THE BREAKUPS

If the musical career of Fleetwood Mac had suddenly cruised into the commercial fast lane, the personal relationships within the band began to hit the emotional buffers, starting with the McVies, and moving through the band like some sort of bizarre domino effect which left no one untouched. As sessions for the follow-up to the

Fleetwood Mac album got under way, the emotional unravelling of the band's members continued, with Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks coming apart as a couple soon afterwards, and finally Mick Fleetwood's marriage, already rocked by his wife's affair with former band member Bob Weston, also ended. Five people, including two couples, were all trying to make a record about love and breakup, while each of them endured the end of their own personal relationship. It sounds like a bad soap opera, but Fleetwood Mac endured the daily trauma of living and working with individuals who were rapidly coming to hate the sight of each other. Matters were not helped by the laissez-faire attitude of the record label and studio personnel which meant those studio sessions were open-ended time wise, and cocaine was limitless and freely available to anyone who felt the need of an emotional escape – which in this case meant everyone in the band.

After 3,000 hours of recordings, and the virtual, emotional and physical collapse of the entire band, *Rumours* was finished, and released in February 1977. It has since sold over 50 million copies, making it one of the top 10 best selling albums ever made – and one of the only albums whose genuine quality and groundbreaking songwriting make it worthy of its sales. In terms of influence, Fleetwood Mac, and in particular guitarist Lindsey Buckingham, have gone on to directly affect the styles and writing of millions of guitarists and songwriters the world over. The miracle is not just what a wonderful album *Rumours* is, it's that the band survived intact, and the individuals managed not to kill themselves with alcohol, cocaine and sheer overwork. Many bands would have crumbled and dissolved at any of the disparate stages in the saga of Fleetwood Mac, but as millions of fans know, this is not just any band.

THE FUTURE

When I last spoke to Lindsey Buckingham about the future of Fleetwood Mac, he told me that his own personal ambitions for the band were to see out perhaps the next 10 years, and that was five years ago. True to his ambition – Fleetwood Mac reconvened in February 2013 for rehearsals leading to a world tour. Gossip abounded that they'd headline Glastonbury, but at the time of writing,

that's not happened. They have a world tour planned for 2015, with a headline slot at the Isle of Wight Festival.

Although all the band are in their sixties now, the vigour and pleasure they bring to their live shows remains undiminished, along with the realisation that the band itself, and the music they have made is greater than the fights and feuds that they endured making it. So be sure to see a genuine musical legend perform live for what may be the final time, and if you are not one of the 50 million people who own a copy of *Rumours*, now is the time to find out why so many people do. If you have ever loved and lost, you will find songs that speak to you from the musicians who know exactly how it feels and who put their lives into their work forever.

A final thought... I remember in the late 70s watching Fleetwood Mac play a stadium show, and punk icons The Clash playing my local town hall concert room, both within two days of

each other. I was memorably amazed by the differences between them. One band was soft and flabby, going through the motions though their hearts were obviously no longer in what they were doing. The other was vibrant and energetic; the live versions of their songs being so left-field of the album tracks that it took a while to figure out what song they were actually playing. One band looked bored and unenthusiastic, the other put so much fire and passion into their most inflammatory song that the guitarist broke a string, but simply carried on to the end of the song. In case it's not apparent which band is which, only one of them will be touring in 2015. Having sold over 100 million records, Fleetwood Mac is

one of the best selling bands of all time. *Fleetwood Mac headline the Isle of Wight Festival 2015. A worldwide tour is scheduled throughout the year. Tickets are on sale now.*

www.fleetwoodmac.com

THE PERSONNEL LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM

GUITARS, DOBRO,
BASS GUITAR, PERCUSSION,
VOCALS, PRODUCER

STEVIE NICKS

VOCALS, TAMBOURINE,
PRODUCER

CHRISTINE MCVIE

KEYBOARDS, PIANO,
HAMMOND ORGAN, CLAVINET,
VOCALS, PRODUCER

JOHN MCVIE

BASS GUITAR, PRODUCER

MICK FLEETWOOD

DRUMS, PERCUSSION,
HARPSICHORD, PRODUCER

KEN CAILLAT

PRODUCER, ENGINEER,
MASTERING

RICHARD DASHUT

PRODUCER, ENGINEER



Buckingham's hurt and anger over the loss of Stevie Nicks. Having sung his heart out, Buckingham then translates all that angst and agony into one of the most searing guitar solos ever committed to record. Even today, Stevie Nicks will speak of her regret that the line "Packing up, shacking up's all you wanna do..." was aimed directly at her. The two-edged sword of composition lies here – speaking how you felt at the time is the way you must speak so many years later when life has moved on.

■ 'SONGBIRD'

Christine McVie's solo song must have influenced hundreds of solo female musicians to bear their soul in this way. Recorded in one take in a California theatre auditorium late at night, her own coming-to-terms with the loss of her marriage to husband John bears all the emotion of the rest of the album in its heart-felt vocal and sweet piano.

■ 'THE CHAIN'

Even by the standards of bottomless soul bearing that characterises this album, this song has the most deeply felt vocal deliveries from Lindsey Buckingham, harmonised by Nicks. "And if you don't love me now, you will never love me again..." is a line that has probably sustained many a listener, along with the positively spat-out, "Damn your love, damn your lies..." that lets the heartbroken know that someone else knows exactly how they feel. It is the construction of this song – credited to the whole band – that made Fleetwood Mac stand apart by some distance from the California soft-rock genre that they were lumped into by lazy journalists championing punk rock.

■ 'YOU MAKE LOVING FUN'

Steering away from the depths of anguish, Christine McVie writes an upbeat song to confirm her new relationship which eventually led her to leave the band and the United States to return to her native England and a life away from the madness of these times.

■ 'I DON'T WANT TO KNOW'

Nicks harmonises with Buckingham and McVie in another up-beat, cheerful song that once again belies the confusion and emotion of its lyrical subject matter – the aftermath where nothing ends neatly and moves on – especially when you are working with the person you're singing about.

■ 'OH DADDY'

Apparently a love song, but in fact Christine McVie's appreciation of "Daddy" – Mick Fleetwood who held the band together as it careered through torment and excess and saw it emerge with one of the greatest albums ever made. Her temptation to walk away before the album was completed was reasoned out of her by Fleetwood who had invested too much to keep his group together to see it all fall apart now.

■ 'GOLD DUST WOMAN'

The sign-off song on this record is one of its most extraordinary songs. Nicks refers openly to the drug excess that had completely taken over the recording sessions for this album. Its minor chords, Buckingham's ghostly Dobro overdubs and again those unique harmonies underpinning Nicks' own unique vocal sound. For a band supposedly mired in soft-rock, nothing about this song is comfortable at all – a metaphor for the end of any and all relationships that have made this album continuously successful.

The Story Of... ERIC CLAPTON

Arguably the first British guitarist to achieve A-list megastardom, Eric Clapton has notched up an unbelievable 50 years in the music industry and he's playing London's Royal Albert hall this May to commemorate that milestone – as well as celebrating his 70th birthday.

Words by David Mead Images by Guitar Center and C.F. Martin & Co.

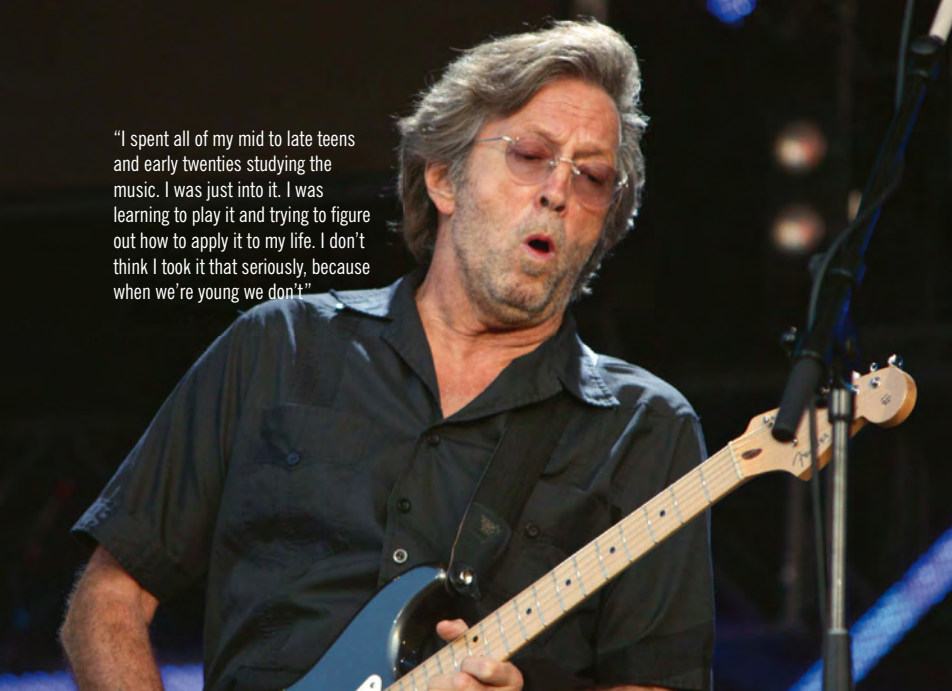
I realise that it's a bit of a cliché, but I can honestly say that I can remember the first time I became aware of Eric Clapton's playing. I was at a school friend's house and he put on the LP *Goodbye Cream*, track one, side one, of which was the Skip James classic 'I'm So Glad' recorded live at the LA Forum in October 1968. I was hooked. Despite being somewhat bewildered by the torrent of notes coming at me from the speakers, it must have had an impact because that moment marked the beginning of a lifelong love affair with the guitar and a determination to seek my own career in music. But according to Marc Roberty's excellent book *Eric Clapton Day By Day* we have to backtrack some years to find the beginning of the man's ascent towards superstardom...

So back to 1963 we go and Clapton's first band – The Roosters – were playing gigs in the Surrey and London areas. One of EC's bandmates at that time was The Blues Band's Tom McGuinness: 'My then girlfriend went to art school with Eric and she introduced me to him,' he tells me. 'We got chatting and you only had to mention a name like John Lee Hooker and his eyes lit up. We just realised that we loved the same music and it's hard to believe now how rare that was in those days. It was like being a Freemason and giving a secret handshake!'

The Roosters lasted around eight



"Anybody who had any idea of how to play any instrument could just about hold their own because there was no competition. If you could play anything in a halfway convincing fashion you were the boss and there were so few of us. If you were pretty good you could work all the time and you'd get fairly well paid..."



"I spent all of my mid to late teens and early twenties studying the music. I was just into it. I was learning to play it and trying to figure out how to apply it to my life. I don't think I took it that seriously, because when we're young we don't"

ON THE ROAD

We talk to Clapton's guitar tech Lee Dickson who looked after his six-strings for 33 years...

months and played some prestigious gigs including London's infamous Marquee Club, but McGuinness doesn't recall any signs of Clapton's later guitar mastery: 'I'd love to say I spotted that Eric was going to be the genius guitar player he turned out to be, but I didn't,' he chuckles. 'We were just two young guys who were trying to learn the music we loved...' All good things come to an end and in the September of that same year, 'Eric and I wandered off to play with a guy from Liverpool called Casey Jones. That lasted about two months and then Eric slipped into The Yardbirds and I got the call to join The Manfreds.'

It was in The Yardbirds that Clapton's guitar playing started to seep into the public's consciousness, but by the time he joined John Mayall's Bluesbreakers in early 1965 he was well on his way to deification, with graffiti artists boldly proclaiming: "Clapton Is God" on any convenient surface across London's cityscape.

When I met Clapton during the sessions for his album *From The Cradle* at Olympic Studios he recalled his early obsession with the blues: 'I spent all of my mid to late teens and early twenties studying the music; studying the geography of it, the chronology of it. The roots, the different regional influences and how everybody inter-related and how long people lived and how quickly they learnt things and how many songs they had of their own and what songs were shared around... I mean I was just into it. I was learning to play it as well and trying to figure out how to apply it to my life. I don't think I took it that seriously, because when we're young we don't; it was only when other people showed an interest that I realised that I could make a living out of it.'

He was also surprisingly downbeat about his abilities back then, too: 'Anybody who had any idea of how to play any instrument could just about hold their own because there was no competition – there was no one around. If you could play anything in a halfway convincing fashion you were the boss and there were so few of us. If you were pretty good you could work all the time and you'd get fairly well paid...'

Anyone who has heard John Mayall's celebrated *Beano* album would probably disagree with the "pretty good" tag – I've met so many players who cite that particular album as the principal architecture for their own electric guitar sound, including the late Gary Moore: 'When I heard the Bluesbreakers' album, like a lot of guitarists of my generation, that was the thing that turned the world upside down for me. When I heard that guitar, that was as powerful for me as Robert Johnson was for Eric. To hear a guitar become the main voice in the music and to be that forceful and so direct, it was amazing, there was nothing like that before and nothing like it since either, really.'

Alas, Clapton's tenure with John Mayall was another short one as it wasn't long before he teamed up with Jack Bruce and Ginger Baker to form Cream, celebrated as being the world's first supergroup. The explosive chemistry of the three players, all of whom were from very different backgrounds musically speaking, wasn't precisely what Clapton had planned... 'It was meant to be a blues trio,' he tells me. 'I just didn't have the assertiveness to take control. Those two were the powerful, dominant personalities in the band. Ginger did the business and they sort of ran

Clapton is no stranger to acoustic guitars. Indeed, his first ever guitar was a Hoya steel string from Bell's in Kingston. But for a sneak peek into EC's acoustic side, there's no better man to speak to than Lee Dickson, who was Clapton's guitar tech for 33 years.

'His favourite steel string was, I believe, the old [Martin] 000-42 that went for big bucks in the auction,' Lee says. 'There was also a sister guitar, only a few serial numbers apart – from memory they were both 1939. He also had a Lowden that he loved to record with and on the odd occasion played it live. He has a history over the past 15 years or so of playing gut strings – nearly always flamenco guitars; Ramirez and Gerundino. He wanted to play them live, but with no pickups it was a daunting task for Robert Collins, his sound engineer. We just couldn't get it right due to the arenas, crowd noise and so on. A lot of his writing was done with gut strings though, when he'd be at home.'

I asked Lee if Clapton had his Martins set up in a particular way. 'All the guitars from Martin (and there were many signature models, custom orders, limited editions he did in conjunction with his friend Hiroshi [Fujiwara] from Japan) he pretty much played right out of the case. Sometimes I would have to shave a bit off the saddle, or make a little adjustment at the nut, but he was generally happy with most of the Martins and played his 000-28EC models a lot live.'

And how did Clapton amplify his acoustics live and in the studio? 'As far as pickups went he used whatever Martin supplied and sometimes Robert would put a mic in front of him for the more organic sound and I would also plug him in to an Avalon DI so he'd get a bit of both in his monitors – as you know piezos can be a bit brittle sounding sometimes. Recording, we would always use microphones and his long time studio engineer Alan Douglas used to take care of all that.'

Tom McGuinness (The Blues Band):
 "I'd love to say I spotted that Eric
 was going to be the genius guitar
 player he turned out to be, but I
 didn't. We were just two young
 guys who were trying to learn the
 music we loved..."



the show and I just played. I just went with the flow in the end and I enjoyed it greatly, but it wasn't anything like I expected it to be at all.'

Despite taking on the overtones of the jazz movement to which Bruce and Baker belonged, Cream covered a great deal of blues material, from Willie Dixon's 'Spoonful' to Robert Johnson's 'Crossroads Blues' which both appeared on the album *Wheels Of Fire* in 1968, the solo on the Johnson track still rated by many as one of Clapton's finest recorded moments. Despite the indelible stamp the band left upon the music world, Cream only lasted around 18 months before imploding. 'I think my overall feeling about it now is that it was kind of a glorious mistake,' Clapton says. 'I had a completely different idea of what it would be before I started it and it ended up being a wonderful thing, but nothing like it was meant to be.' Cream performed their last gig at London's Royal Albert Hall in November 1968 posing the question, what next?

More brief tenures with Blind Faith and Delaney and Bonnie followed before Clapton formed Derek And The Dominos, the *Layla* album becoming the soundtrack to Clapton's drug fuelled descent into a dark abyss... 'I don't know whether it can be fairly placed at the door of drugs or

relationships or life issues as much as I just had to get away. I had been doing so much; I'd been out there for a long time, playing and playing with no break.'

Whatever the cause, by early 1971 Clapton was a recluse, holed up in his country house in the Surrey countryside, not taking any calls and refusing visitors. George Harrison managed to coax him out to perform at the Concert For Bangla Desh in the July of that year, but anyone who has seen the concert video will affirm that Clapton was not anywhere near on form. In fact, he looked downright ill. It was Pete Townshend who finally managed to get Clapton back on stage at the Rainbow Theatre in January 1973 and it set a precedent for the rest of the 1970s, which saw Clapton overworking and overindulging at the same rate. 'Toured and recorded and got out of it,' he says. 'I had a great time, but it was all fairly directionless... I'm just very grateful that I survived it and didn't die because I was often in some very seriously dangerous situations with booze and drugs.' This included being so drunk he had to play one gig laying down and at one point being hospitalised with an ulcer "the size of an orange."

The rest of the 1970s and early 1980s saw some memorable recordings and

some of the live recordings from that period testify to Clapton's ongoing prowess as a player, but it wasn't until Live Aid in July 1985 that things began to turn around for the better. Walking onstage that day in Philadelphia, Clapton received a resounding ovation from the crowd. 'When they told me where I was going to be on the billing I didn't get it - I thought: "What? Really?" and that really did a lot for my acceptance of myself; other people's opinion. And that reception... actually, yeah, it was mind-blowing.'

The world now witnessed an Armani clad, clean cut and sober version of Clapton and a return to form in the recording studio. Elevated at last to a stadium filling pop/rock phenomenon, the 1990s saw Clapton take over the Albert Hall annually for a series of concerts that were dubbed 'The Clapton Proms' by the party faithful.

In 1992, MTV convinced Clapton to lay aside his signature Fender Stratocaster and pick up an acoustic guitar for the *Unplugged* sessions. Biographer Marc Roberty remembers... 'I was lucky enough to be invited to Bray Studios to watch the filming of Eric's first all-acoustic show for MTV's *Unplugged* series in 1992. Several of the songs Eric had written about the tragic loss of his son the previous year were played in public for the first time that day. 'Tears In Heaven' was a particularly poignant moment for him during the performance. The acoustic format of the show also allowed him to rearrange his well known hits - 'Layla' in particular fooled everyone on the night. A personal highlight was the unplanned - and unrehearsed - performance of 'Rollin' And Tumblin'". Played during some downtime in between takes, it caught the producer off guard and the record button was hit a minute or so into the song. It was not on the set list and was never meant to be played.'

Despite the Grammys it produced, Clapton was surprisingly dismissive of the *Unplugged* session. 'When Warner Brothers suggested it should be released as a CD, Eric was very much against the idea,' Roberty continues. 'Had the show been recorded with that idea in mind, he has admitted that he would have done things differently.'

When I spoke to Clapton I mentioned the furore that the CD and consequent video caused. 'I must admit I found it all a little bit overblown,' he says. 'I mean, I thought the album was quite rough, to say the least. I think most of the recognition and applause was wrapped up in another

gesture – which is beautiful and I don't want to put that down at all. I appreciate all of it, but I felt it was all a little bit blown out of proportion.'

The result of the *Unplugged* album also kick started the Martin signature series, beginning with the 000-42EC model released in 1995. This was a limited edition of 461, a tie-in with the *461 Ocean Boulevard* album which had been released 21 years previously. It has been said that the fantastic response on behalf of the public to this album was responsible for an upsurge in interest in acoustic guitar sales worldwide. From an industry insider point of view I have personally witnessed a lot of very exciting innovations since that time, both in terms of instrument design and peripherals like pick-up technology, too. Coincidence? Well, perhaps, but there's no doubt that the MTV series alone, which also featured bands like Nirvana, Bob Dylan and The Eagles, was immensely popular and quite probably elevated the instrument in the consciousness of the public at large.

There are always rumours going round that EC will retire from the album/world tour merry-go-round, but the legacy he leaves behind is a potent one. All over the world, guitarists have been inspired to pick up the instrument and explore music themselves, often citing Clapton as a principal inspiration as they do so. In view of this, I'll leave the last word to the man himself, responding to my question about what advice he would pass on to the next generation of blues guitarists: 'Listen, listen, listen and go back as far as you dare; that's what I still do today. I still listen to Leroy Carr and Scrapper Blackwell for their beauty and simplicity and to get a feeling, because that's what it's about. It's not about technique, it's not about what kind of instrument you play or how many strings it's got or how fast you can play or how loud it is or how quiet it is; it's about how it feels and how it makes you feel when you play.'

Eric Clapton plays London's Royal Albert Hall this May. For tickets, visit the website.

www.ericclapton.com



As solidified by his groundbreaking acoustic performance on MTV *Unplugged*, Eric's clear preference in acoustic guitars was for the smaller bodied Martin 000 auditorium guitars

CLAPTON AND C.F. MARTIN & CO.

Clapton's association with Martin Guitars didn't stop at a single limited edition. We spoke to Dick Boak, Martin's director of special projects, regarding the company's ongoing enthusiasm to work with EC on a whole range of limited edition signature guitars

'As solidified by his groundbreaking acoustic performance on MTV *Unplugged*, Eric's clear preference in acoustic guitars was for the smaller bodied Martin 000 auditorium guitars. He used two different 000s for the MTV show, but his love of that body size goes much further back to the 1960s. Aside from their balanced, sweet tone, it seems logical that Eric preferred the shorter scale 000s for the fluid bendability of the strings. The longer scale 000 or OM Orchestra Models are less bendable and although more projective in tone, perhaps less expressive. Another factor is the comfort associated with the small tight-waisted size of the 000.'

There were times when Clapton would play a Martin dreadnought, however, Dick remembers: 'He has a vintage D-28 that he loves, plus a D12-28 used to play 'Motherless Child' at the onset of tours in the late 1990s. The dreadnought, however, has a big and boomy sound, sometimes presenting feedback situations on stage or too much bass in the studio. The 000 models simply don't have these issues.'

The latest batch of EC Martin limited edition signature models (released in 2013) comprises a couple of 000-45s and a 000-28, all of which feature some sumptuous appointments, with the proceeds going to Clapton's Crossroads charity. Completing this thumbnail sketch of the man's career, post *Unplugged*, Clapton continued to tour and produce albums – and nearly always featured an acoustic set during live performances – a tip of the hat, no doubt, to the 20 million sales notched up by *Unplugged*.

NEW RELEASES

ARTIST	TITLE	LABEL	GENRE
Arthur	Dreams And Images	Light In The Attic	Psych Folk
Steve Ashley	This Little Game	Market Square	Folk
Chet Atkins	Long Play Collection	Goldies	Country
Luigi Attademo	Paganini: Music For Viola And Guitar	Brilliant Classics	Classical
Phil Beer	Box Set One	Talking Elephant	Folk
Norman Blake	Wood, Wire & Words	Western Jubilee	Country
Joaquín Clerch	Etudes: Villalobos / Brouwer	IBS Classical	Classical
Jim Croce	The Studio Album Collection	Edsel	Folk
Bob Dylan	Shadows In The Night	Columbia	Folk
Raymond Fairchild & The Maggie Valley Boys	King Of The Smoky Mountain Banjo Players	Rural Rhythm	Bluegrass
Flatt & Scruggs	At Carnegie Hall: Complete Concert	Sony	Bluegrass
Grace Griffith	Passing Through	Blix Street	Folk
Bella Hardy	With The Dawn	NOE	Folk
Hayseed Dixie	Hair Down To My Grass	Hayseed Dixie	Bluegrass
Rob Ickes & Trey Hensley	Before The Sun Goes Down	Compass	Country
Annie Keating	Make Believing	Annie Keating	Americana
The Alan Kelly Gang	The Last Bell	BlackBox Music	Irish
Danny Kroha	Angels Watching Over Me	Third Man	Alt Folk
Harry Manx	20 Strings And The Truth	Harry Manx	Blues
John Martyn	Sapphire	Commercial	Folk
Noel McLoughlin	20 Best Irish Songs	Arc Music	Irish
Findlay Napier	VIP: Very Interesting Persons	Cheerygroove	Folk
Willie Nile	If I Was A River	Blue Rose	Country
Gretchen Peters	Blackbirds	Proper	Country
Porchlight Smoker	Water Into Sand	Dead Reckoning	Roots
Angaleena Presley	American Middle Class	Thirty Tigers	Country
Alasdair Roberts	Alasdair Roberts	Drag City	Folk
Mark Rogers & Mary Byrne	I Line My Days Along Your Weight	Important	Folk
Jack Savoretti	Written In Scars	BMG	Folk
Seasick Steve	Sonic Soul Surfer	Dead Skunk	Blues
Doug Seegers	Going Down To The River	Wrasse	Country
The Shires	Brave	Decca	Country
Alison Smith	Incandescent	Alison Smith	Classical
Southern Tenant Folk Union	The Chuck Norris Project	Johnny Rock	Folk
Chip Taylor	The Little Prayers Trilogy	Trainwreck	Americana
Joe Topping	The Vagrant Kings	Fellside	Folk
Silvia Vajente and Adriano Sebastiano	Rossini: Ariettes Italiennes For Voice And Guitar	Brilliant Classics	Classical
David Wiffen	Songs From The Lost & Found	True North	Folk
Tom Zé	Tom Zé	Mr Bongo	Brazilian
Various Artists	Robert Burns — The Complete Songs Volume 1	Linn	Scottish

MY LIFE IN MUSIC



Andy McKee

From YouTube star to international success story, Andy McKee has got it all – the technique, the Greenfield guitar, and what he says counts the most: the feeling. We welcome a guitar master to talk about the albums that shaped his sound.

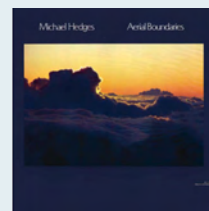
In the 1980s, fingerstyle guitarists like Michael Hedges and Preston Reed pioneered an acoustic guitar style based on an alternate-tuned, percussion-heavy, new age-tinged sound. Kaki King went on to develop it with her 2002 debut *Everybody Loves You*. You'll hear some people call the movement "progressive acoustic guitar" while others may call it "modern fingerstyle".

Jon Gomm, one of its latest (and most popular) exponents, has even heard it referred to as "banging", due to its practitioners' tendency to rap, slap and knock their hands against the body of an acoustic guitar for percussive effect. Whatever you call it, there's no doubt that this genre of acoustic guitar-based music is experiencing a resurgence. In 2006, an unassuming acoustic guitar teacher from Topeka, Kansas, called Andy McKee uploaded a handful of videos of himself

playing some original and incredibly complex instrumental acoustic guitar compositions to YouTube – and his life changed. One video in particular, 'Drifting' became one of YouTube's first viral sensations. This is likely because it was both melodically engaging and aesthetically stunning and it subsequently racked up millions of views on the then-new site.

McKee hasn't just sat on this online success, though. Knowing that you can disappear on the internet as quickly as you appeared, he's used his online stardom to build up a monumental worldwide following, and plays over 250 gigs a year. Andy has since become the figurehead of this style of guitar playing, and a whole host of talented guitarists have followed in his wake. Here, he tells us about the albums that changed his sound forever.

www.andymckee.com



MICHAEL HEDGES: AERIAL BOUNDARIES

I love this album for its creativity and brilliance. Every

composition is full of so much imagination – it's staggering. This album changed everything about what the perceived possibilities of the acoustic guitar were. All fingerstyle acoustic guitarists owe such a debt to Michael Hedges. I actually met fellow fingerstylist Jon Gomm through a mutual love of Michael Hedges. We both used to frequent a web page called *rootwitch.com*, which was a site dedicated to Michael. There was a very active forum there and we used to post tunes and talk about the profundities of Michael's work. We finally met in person at the City Varieties in Leeds when I opened for Tommy Emmanuel in 2007.

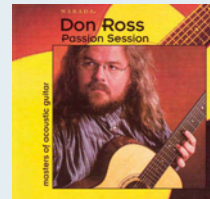
PRESTON REED: METAL



This record was my gateway into the world of modern acoustic guitar music. I love every last track on *Metal*.

It's secured a special place in my life and I get very nostalgic when I listen. Preston is the king of percussive guitar playing! Seeing Preston Reed do a guitar clinic made me want to incorporate percussive techniques into my playing. My cousin took me to go see him in Topeka, Kansas. He was sponsoring Washburn guitars at the time and he was brought in by a local music store that sold them. It was like a fire was ignited after watching him do his thing.

DON ROSS: PASSION SESSION



This is another album that is just perfect to me. *Passion Session* is perhaps the best recording of an acoustic guitar out there – and

every track is so good! When I first heard 'Klimbim', I knew Don would be a profound influence on me within moments. In fact, there are some great instructional videos and books out there. A couple that I picked up were all of the artists I've mentioned here: Preston Reed's instructional video *The Guitar of Preston Reed*, Don Ross' *The Answer Video*, and Michael Hedges' *Rhythm, Sonority, and Silence*.

GIG GUIDE

We select the best live music highlights happening February 12 through March 12, 2015

GEORGE EZRA

Bristol Colston Hall (Feb 17), Birmingham O2 Academy (Feb 18), London O2 Academy Brixton (Feb 20), Manchester O2 Apollo (Feb 21), Glasgow O2 Academy (Feb 22)
£22.50

Singer-songwriter and folk-blues balladeer George Ezra first came to attention when BBC Introducing in his adopted home of Bristol picked up on a handful of tracks posted online. That led to a live session at the legendary Maida Vale studios and an oversubscribed performance on their stage at the 2013 Glastonbury Festival. Ezra possesses a deep, resonant, and emotionally weathered voice that belies his considerable youth. Influenced by similarly precocious troubadours like Dylan and Hank Williams, Ezra was just 19 when he issued his debut single 'Budapest' a soulful slice of classy folk-pop that invokes names like Willy Mason, Ben Howard, and Ray Lamontagne. His debut *Wanted On Voyage* is out now.
www.georgeezra.com

KODALINE

Manchester Albert Hall (Feb 16), London Roundhouse (Feb 17), Nottingham Rock City (March 9), Southampton Guildhall (March 10), Norwich UEA (March 11), Bristol O2 Academy (March 12)
£17

Currently maintaining an air of understated mystery (their Facebook bio states, merely, "we're four lads in a band"), Kodaline is a hotly tipped Dublin quartet. "Where they'll be by summer 2014: near the top of the bill at a festival near you, having the words deafeningly sung back at them," says *The Guardian*. Their second album *Coming Up For Air* is out on February 9 via Sony.
www.kodaline.com



GIG OF THE MONTH

COUNTRY 2 COUNTRY FESTIVAL

MARCH 7 & 8 2015
O2 Arena, Peninsula Square, London, SE10 0DX
£131.45 WEEKEND / £50.60 – £83.60 DAY

After a storming success in March 2014 where 50,000 country fans packed out The O2 in London and Dublin 3Arena, Country 2 Country is back on March 7 & 8, 2015.

Nashville's biggest country stars will head to Europe and perform in what has become the biggest country music festival this side of the Atlantic. Country 2 Country 2015 will be headlined by Luke Bryan and Lady Antebellum, joined by Florida Georgia Line, Jason Aldean, Brandy Clark, Brantley Gilbert, Kip Moore and more. Featuring pop-up stalls around the O2 with UK talent performing, C2C brings Nashville to London. Airing for four days only, from 5 to 8 March, Radio 2 Country will broadcast live coverage from C2C live from London's O2 presented by Bob Harris and a selection of other BBC Radio 2 DJs.

www.theo2.co.uk
www.c2c-countrytocountry.com

THE UKE ORCHESTRA OF GREAT BRITAIN

February 28, 2015
G Live, Guildford
£25

The world-renowned all-singing, all-plucking superstars return with their toe-tapping music, hilarious banter and superlative entertainment. The Ukes dash through all genres of music, from classical to trivial pop and vice versa. Now with more songs, more tunes and with yet more added bonus ukuleles, if the entertainment value of the Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain could be bottled it would increase your well being in one dose! Imagine the sounds of your favourite grunge, classical, punk, rock 'n' roll and indie classics, all through the medium of ukulele. Let this cult collective show you the way.

www.ukuleleorchestra.com

BEAR'S DEN

Manchester Gorilla (Feb 13), Cardiff Clwb Ifor Bach (Feb 15), Oxford O2 Academy (Feb 16), Brighton Concorde 2 (Feb 18), London Shepherd's Bush Empire (March 3)
£10

The Bear's Den story is something of a fairytale, opening with the truly bewitching Austin to Boston Communion Tour of the US in March of 2012, where they shared the stage with Nathaniel Rateliff, The Staves and Ben Howard. From there, the band traveled to the Welsh wilderness to record their eponymous debut EP. In keeping with their DIY ethos, the band did everything themselves. After a rapid succession of high-profile support tours, the stage is now set for Bear's Den to plunge into the deep end with debut album *Islands* which is out now via Communion Records.

www.bearsdenmusic.co.uk



Jon Gomm

MARCH 2015

- 04 - NOTTINGHAM GLEE CLUB
- 06 - BIRMINGHAM GLEE CLUB
- 10 - YORK FIBBERS
- 13 - THE EVI EBBW VALE
- 15 - CARDIFF MOON CLUB
- 16 - BRISTOL COLSTON HALL 2
- 17 - SOUTHAMPTON JOINERS
- 18 - LONDON JAZZ CAFE
- 21 - DEVIZES ST MARYS
- 23 - CAMBRIDGE JUNCTION 2

24 - BRIGHTON KOMEDIA
26 - LIVERPOOL LEAF CAFE
27 - MANCHESTER GORILLA
28 - NEWCASTLE CLUNY 2
30 - SHEFFIELD CORPORATION

APRIL 2015

- 01 - HEBDEN BRIDGE TRADES CLUB
- 04 - LEEDS BRUDENELL

AN EVENING WITH ARTHUR BROWN

MARCH 2015

- 12 - WOLVERHAMPTON, THE ROBIN 2
- 13 - YORK, FIBBERS
- 20 - EATNEY, THE CELLARS
- 21 - BARNSTAPLE, THE FACTORY
- 27 - LIVERPOOL, LEAF
- 28 MANCHESTER, RUBY LOUNGE

APRIL 2015

- 02 - LONDON 100 CLUB



Judith Owen

16 MARCH 15
BUSH HALL
LONDON
310 UXBRIDGE ROAD
W12 7LJ

FEATURING LEGENDARY MUSICIANS

- LELAND SKLAR (BASS)
- WADDY WACHTEL (GUITAR)
- RUSSEL KUNKEL (DRUMS)



Peppina D'Agostina

MAY 2015

- 06 - LONDON, SURYA
- 07 - MILTON KEYNES, CRAUFORD ARMS
- 08 - REDDITCH, THE QUEENS HEAD
- 10 - CHESTER, TELFORDS WAREHOUSE
- 11 - COTTINGHAM (HULL), THE BACK ROOM



Miriam Jones

MAY 2015

- 26 - LONDON, BORDERLINE
- 30 - BIRMINGHAM, ALFIE BIRDS
- 31 - MANCHESTER, GULLIVERS

GLASSWERK PRESENTS

JON GOMM

"Masterpieces inflected with tribal rhythms, pop melodic sense and Gomm's flowing draped-over vocals that would surely make even Eric Clapton blush." - NATIONAL POST (CANADA)

"Hands down the most amazing guitarist I have ever seen" - TOMMY LEE

"One of the world's most successful gifted and inspirational guitar players" - ACOUSTIC MAGAZINE

"Wonderful to watch. Genius" - STEPHEN FRY



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WHY NOT VISIT THE OFFICIAL WEBSITE
WWW.JONGOMM.COM

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